

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 18 November 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
18 NOVEMBER 1968

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1. South Vietnam

The eruption of Communist attacks in and around Da Nang city this weekend and in other military and civilian areas of I Corps had been widely anticipated

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[redacted] Da Nang in particular was targeted in [redacted]
[redacted] reports which also pointed toward the resumption of significant enemy offensive activity in the III Corps - Saigon area. A 15 November [redacted] report cited plans for a "general offensive and uprising" against Da Nang and other major urban centers between now and the end of November. Major attacks against other cities have yet to occur

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2. Soviet Union

Zond-6, the Russians' unmanned circumlunar probe, re-entered the earth's atmosphere early yesterday,

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3. Czechoslovakia

The Czechoslovak Communist Party met the expected bid for power by party conservatives with the creation of an eight-man executive committee. Both liberals and conservatives are represented on it, but the essentially moderate cast of the committee should prevent extremists of either faction from seizing control. Liberals Dubcek, Sloboda, Cernik, and Smrkovsky all retained their seats after the stormy central committee session, but what looks like a Soviet stooge has been installed in four top party posts in the person of Lubomir Strougal, a close friend of former party boss Novotny.

During the session Dubcek and other leaders made a quick flight to see Brezhnev in Warsaw and give him a status report on the proceedings. The plenum ended without resolving basic differences over the party's future course, but the Soviets now seem better placed for the next stage of the continuing struggle.

Prague's students have defied the government's warnings against protest activity, but they have so far confined their action to nonprovocative sit-ins in university buildings. Their call for a nationwide sit-in "just like the one in France" could lead to trouble, however.

4. France

The franc is going downhill fast, and is now considered to be in serious trouble. The big speculators are cashing in their francs, and some of their other currencies, for the popular Deutsche mark, just as in 1967-68 they tried to buy up all the gold in sight. The failure of the Western central bankers to announce agreed measures to shore up the franc or stem the tide against it may force the French to impose some very tough domestic controls.

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5. Poland

The party congress has endorsed a new factional balance under Gomulka's continued leadership. It gives significant but not decisive power to a young generation of hard-liners. Personnel shifts announced at the end of the six-day conclave on 16 November have infused new and forceful blood into the leadership, but more of Gomulka's tired old guard remain in circulation than the hard-line faction probably had hoped.

Three of the four newcomers to the leadership are youthful provincial party leaders associated with Gomulka's main factional rivals. None is a liberal. There will be no change for the present in Warsaw's domestic and foreign policies, but the newcomers may try to implement these policies more forcefully.

**6. Iran -
Saudi Arabia**

The Shah of Iran and King Faysal seem to have gotten along very well during the Shah's visit to Jidda, and they agreed on the need for cooperation in the Persian Gulf area to head off subversion by the Soviets and Arab radicals. Cordiality and understanding at the top could override much of the long-standing political, cultural, and religious differences that separate the two countries.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of US Political Attitudes

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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

18 November 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

US Reconnaissance Flights: The North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry issued a statement on 16 November which seems to confirm that Hanoi does not intend now to make continued US reconnaissance flights an obstacle to the Paris talks. Supporting remarks made the day before by a North Vietnamese spokesman in Paris, the foreign ministry statement denounced US reconnaissance flights but threatened no diplomatic retaliation. It dismissed US charges of North Vietnamese violations in the DMZ as a US trick aimed at convincing the world that Hanoi had agreed to conditions in order to obtain a bombing halt--but it went on to charge that the US, not North Vietnam, had recently launched attacks in the DMZ. The statement again repeated the Communist demand that the US move on to the next stage of the Paris talks, with or without Saigon.

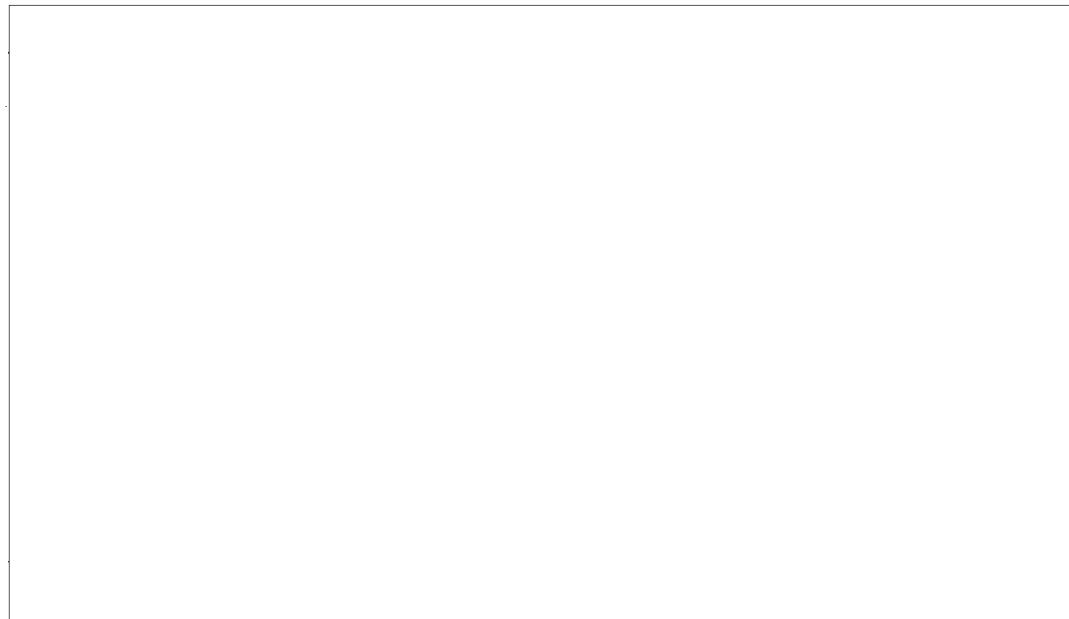
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Effects of Mining of North Vietnamese Rivers: River traffic in southern North Vietnam continues to be impeded somewhat by US "destructors" mines sown before the bombing halt. The North Vietnamese are improving their techniques for sweeping these mines, the latest wrinkle being a pair of sampans rigged to the bow of an amphibious truck. The sampans probably mount some kind of electromagnetic gear to detect and perhaps explode the sunken mines. Recent intercepts have referred to a "relatively safe" mine-clearing apparatus used in conjunction with amphibious vehicles.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Secretary Clifford and President Thieu: Eager to exploit any sign of friction between the US and its South Vietnamese allies, the Communists in a Liberation Radio broadcast beamed to South Vietnam on 15 November described Secretary Clifford's recent remarks as a "slap in the face" to President Thieu.

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The broadcast said Clifford's comments criticizing Thieu's attitude toward the expanded Paris talks clearly showed Thieu's position as a "puppet" who is president "in name only." It likened Thieu to a disobedient servant being scolded by his "master." The broadcast ended with the standard prediction that the future would bring the downfall of the Thieu government and the rise of a "people's peace cabinet."

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